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Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and Writing the Nineteenth-Century Forest by Costlow, Jane T. Review by: Alexandra Smith

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realities have produced a reassertion of national or regional identity: one trend in the Bulgarian films explored by Dina Iordanova has been precisely to 'embrace' Bulgaria's ascribed status as Balkan Other on Europe's wild fringes.

The book provides detailed information on a wide spectrum of film-related institutions, from funding arrangements to film festivals and the state of local cinema facilities. While the narrative feature film unavoidably takes central place in any wide-ranging study like this, admirable space is given to animation, documentary and experimental filmmaking, areas where significant work is being produced (like Péter Forgács's found footage-based *Private Hungary* series). The book's tone can be spikey, even darkly amusing when covering institutional dysfunctionality, and the welcome provision of information is combined with sound critical assessments (though Emir Kusturica is arguably treated too harshly). There is perhaps a favouring of socially engaged films, as well as a broad preference for art over 'popular' cinema. Whatever one's own cultural preferences, Peter Hames is certainly correct to argue that popularity and profitability, when enforced as the sole criteria of cinematic success, amount to a 'Market Stalinism' destructive of true diversity. In distinction from some of the other perspectives, Bohdan Y. Nebesio champions 'commercial' Ukrainian films over a lingering tendency towards poetic obscurity, a complementary entreaty for a national cinema not to abandon its audience entirely.

Interacting with and supplementing one another in interesting and fruitful ways, the ideas offered here do justice to the impressive depth and extent of the factual material. This collection of densely researched, well-analysed studies offers a richly informative insight into a specific region that will be unfamiliar to many and also has much to contribute to broader discussions around globalization, film funding, the challenges facing small cinemas and the articulation of national and regional identity.

Macclesfield

JONATHAN OWEN

Costlow, Jane T. *Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and Writing the Nineteenth-Century Forest*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY and London, 2013. xiii + 270 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Index. \$36.50.

JANE COSTLOW's elegantly written, insightful and meticulously researched book discusses the role of the forest in Russian folk tradition, literature and scientific studies. It displays the author's admirable gift of using interdisciplinary approaches in a highly balanced and lucid manner. The book also highlights the existence of a certain cognitive model based on various connections between literary works, environmental studies and artistic

movements in Russia. In a highly innovative way, it also explores many aspects of Russian nineteenth-century environmentalism that had an impact on several developments in the twentieth century. One of the exciting discoveries of the study suggests that some important nineteenth-century Russian educationalist and environmentalist trends had a distinct parallel in America despite the existing difference in cultural traditions and the culture-specific relationship with nature found in both countries. It also brings back to life many forgotten names of influential writers, artists and scientists, including Mel'nikov-Pecherskii, Vladimir Korolenko, Mikhail Nesterov and Dmitrii Kaigorodov.

As Costlow elucidates, her book 'takes as its central focus the cultural resonance of the forest in nineteenth-century Russia — the forest of European Russia rather than Siberia, which has its own web of imaginative significance' (p. 5). As a scholar specializing in environmental studies, Costlow thinks that it is important to investigate cultural contexts (including a set of stories, images and metaphors) in a new way in order to gain insight into human nature. Taking a cue from those Russian critics who speak about a special feeling of nature that both precedes and accompanies thinking about landscape, Costlow also aligns herself with Barry Lopez who advocates the view that different cultures develop their own modes of talking about the land and of conversing with the land. 'As with any cultural process', writes Costlow, 'the conversation is both with the land and with previous conversants: our sense of a place's meaning emerges both from engagement with the place itself and with the cultural traditions already alive there' (p. 6). Costlow's numerous examples taken from scholarly and literary works and the visual arts suggest that the role of the forest as part of the megatext of Russian landscape enables us to understand the most fundamental beliefs that shaped Russian cultural traditions.

The book comprises an Introduction, six chapters, Conclusion, Notes and Index. Chapter one analyses Ivan Turgenev's description of the fields and woodlands in Orel province found in his 1857 story 'Journey into Polesye' as an exemplary work of nature-writing in the Russian style that might be seen as a prototype for subsequent writers. Costlow also notes that 'Turgenev's story is rife with issues of class and the peculiarly bicultural nature of place in Russia' due to the fact that 'the landscape of Russia maps a world that a tiny Europeanised gentry awkwardly cohabited with a vast peasantry whose traditions of place and place-knowledge were radically different' (p. 23). Chapter two focuses on the sacred geographies of the woods found in Mel'nikov-Pecherskii's works; chapter three examines the so-called Forest Question in nineteenth-century Russia; chapter four discusses various manifestations of the civic and environmental imagination embedded in Korolenko's writings; chapter five surveys Nesterov's epiphanic images of Russian woodlands; and chapter six produces an interesting account of educationalist, scientific and

literary works authored by Dmitrii Kaigorodov, whose influence on such writers for children as Bianki and Prishvin was immense. Costlow's definition of Nesterov's paintings as being synonymous with 'a certain kind of Russian of sentimental Slavophilism' (p. 147) can be easily extended to the images of Russian woodlands found in the paintings produced by Ivan Shishkin who is still highly praised in his native Elabuga for creating the most powerful images of the Russian landscape that continue to inspire post-Soviet viewers today. During my own visit to Elabuga in August 2012, I was stunned to hear from the guide working for the Shishkin museum that his images of pine trees were supposed to make me feel both spiritually enlightened and physically healed from the wounds inflicted by the modern lifestyle. Clearly, the guide in Elabuga might have been influenced by the views of Dmitrii Kaigorodov, a professor of forestry, whom Costlow discusses in detail in her last chapter. In addition to teaching and researching forestry sciences in the forestry institute in St Petersburg, Kaigorodov authored many popular essays on natural history, birds and fishing, music and on Russia's forests. He advocated the need to teach children about natural history and the importance of taking them on field trips. His public lectures on Russian environmental issues and on nature were very popular among Soviet peasants and workers in the early 1920s. As a lover and protector of nature, he also influenced several writers for children, including Bianki, who dedicated his *Calendar of Nature* to Kaigorodov. In the Conclusion, Costlow also pays tribute to Andrei Tarkovskii's film, *Mirror*, in which the final scene featuring the field and the forest reinforces many traditional beliefs discussed in her book.

Costlow's pioneering study, one that displays her amazing erudition, is an important contribution to an environmental understanding of Russian culture that also enables the reader to see many complexities of the relationship with nature not only as part of the Russian system of beliefs but also as part of human development. It will appeal to everyone who is interested in Russian studies as well as environmental and anthropological studies.

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Rowley, Alison. *Open Letters: Russian Popular Culture and the Picture Postcard, 1880–1922*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, ON, Buffalo, NY and London, 2013. xii + 323 pp. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$65.00.

THE title of *Open Letters* is the literal translation of the Russian word for 'postcard' — *otkrytoe pis'mo*, or *otkrytka* for short. However, Alison Rowley's